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POLICY ISSUES

The role of women in environment and development

Summary

The present report, submitted in accordance with Governing Council decision 18/6, describes the action taken by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to implement the recommendations of that decision. It also reports on the input of UNEP to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

(a) Take note, with appreciation, of the Executive Director's report;

(b) Welcome and endorse the policy framework document Gender and the Environment: A UNEP Perspective and other activities undertaken in support of the Fourth World Conference on Women;

(c) Note with concern that progress towards the achievement of full integration of gender into the work and activities of UNEP has been hampered by the reduction in resources;

(d) Request the Executive Director to report to the Council at its twentieth session on implementation of this decision.

* UNEP/GC.19/1.

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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

1. While UNEP has demonstrated leadership regarding the role of women in environment and development within the United Nations, it has not, however, been able to respond fully to all the recommendations of Governing Council decisions 17/4 and 18/6.

2. In response to the Governing Council requests which could be achieved within the funding constraints, several activities have been initiated, which aim to integrate a gender perspective and balance into the work and activities of UNEP. These include:

(a) Maintaining efforts to attain the targets set by the United Nations for the representation of women in professional posts and posts at the senior policy-making level (see table A). Despite downsizing within the organization, efforts to achieve staffing targets for women will not be compromised;

(b) Developing a set of guidelines for the integration of gender into UNEP activities, including the design, monitoring and evaluation of programme and projects, resource mobilization strategy, the processing and dissemination of information, training measures, the conduct of meetings, hiring procedures and selection panels;

(c) Incorporating gender sensitivity criteria in the UNEP Project Design, Approval and Evaluation Manual and in the UNEP Publications Manual and the screening of all 1996-1997 projects for gender sensitivity; and

(d) Establishing a gender focal point and convening a gender issues board, with a view to advising the Executive Director on the implementation of gender policies.

Table A: UNEP staff by gender and grade for the period 1992-1996 (as at 30 July)

Grade	1994 W	1994 M	1994 total	1994 % W	1996 W	1996 M	1996 total	1996 % W	1994-96 % change M	1994-96 % change W
USG	1	0	1	100%	1	0	1	100%	0%	0%
ASG	0	0	0	-	0	1	1	0%	100%	0%
D2	2	10	12	17%	3	10	13	23%	0%	50%
D1	2	29	31	6%	4	31	35	11%	7%	100%
P5	13	48	61	21%	10	39	49	20%	(19)%	(23)%
P4	31	75	106	29%	23	60	83	28%	(20)%	(26)%
P3	25	51	76	33%	34	38	72	47%	(25)%	36%
P2	27	29	56	48%	19	25	44	43%	(14)%	(30)%
P1	4	3	7	57%	0	3	3	0%	0%	(100)%
Total	105	245	350	30%	94	207	301	31%	(16)%	(10)%

3. The Executive Director was requested to enhance the cooperation between the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) (Habitat) and UNEP by ensuring an input and contribution by UNEP to Habitat II in the area of gender and environment. Action taken in compliance with this request included:

(a) Sponsoring a special event entitled "Rights to Land/Property", a forum for presentations from various workshops held before Habitat II, on the six best practices with regard to women's legal rights to land and property. The collaborating institutions were the Centre for Housing Rights (COHRE), the Asian Women and Shelter Network (AWAS), the UNCHS (Habitat) Women in Human Settlements Development Programme, the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM);

(b) Participating in the preparatory meetings for Habitat II;

(c) Advocating the mainstreaming of gender and environment components into the Habitat agenda; and

(d) Participating in the Huairou Commission, to ensure that environmental considerations form part of the articulation of gender issues in the Habitat agenda.

4. The Executive Director was further requested to report on the role taken by UNEP in the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995. Actions taken in this regard may be summarized as follows:

(a) UNEP assisted in the preparatory process in the development of section K of the Strategic Objectives and Actions of the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which calls upon nations and peoples to implement the following objectives: involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels; integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development; and strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women;

(b) The Executive Director gave ten specific commitments to meet the global priorities for the advancement of women by the year 2000 in support of the objective of section K and has set in place the necessary institutional structures and implementation strategy. These commitments are to:

(i) endeavour to incorporate women's concerns into UNEP policies, programme and projects;

(ii) adjust recruitment policies to recognize the special constraints that women face and create a favorable environment for the recruitment of women;

(iii) judge managers according to the extent to which they incorporate gender criteria in performance appraisals;

(iv) ensure that women participate and that gender concerns are reflected in policy development work, in particular as it relates to the implementation of environmental conventions;

(v) undertake to give priority to environmental education and training programmes tailored to the needs of women, to empower them to take decisions and to transfer this knowledge to their children;

(vi) design programmes to cater for the needs of women who are often the victims of armed conflicts that take place over land and resources, to empower them to contribute to conflict resolution and prevention at all levels;

(vii) emphasize in law programmes the need to accord women the legal rights to enable them to manage and own land and make decisions on land use;

(viii) strive to strengthen the control of hazardous chemicals banned in industrialized countries that are still exported to developing countries and pose serious risks to health and well-being of women and children;

(ix) advocate and support respect for the fundamental rights of women, which are human rights, to ensure that women contribute fully and freely their knowledge and capacities to the solution of environmental problems at the local, national and global levels; and

(x) ensure that the special skill and responsibilities of women acquired throughout history as managers and nurturers of our natural resource base are recognized and that they are accorded their rightful role in decisions-making at all levels.

(c) UNEP produced the following publications to raise the awareness of conference delegates to the women and environment issues expressed in the Platform for Action:

(i) Gender and the Environment - A UNEP Perspective, a framework document to assist Governments and other organizations in developing strategies and action plans to address the objectives outlined in section K of the Strategic Objectives and Actions of the Platform for Action;

(ii) A special edition of Our Planet devoted to the theme of women and sustainable development, which highlighted the major issues to be addressed. Contributors included Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Gertrude Mongella, Carol Bellamy, Noeleen Heyzer and Sadako Ogata;

(iii) Women and the Environment: making a difference. Global 500 Award winners 1987-1995, a compilation of profiles of outstanding women on the front line of environmental action, including best practice scenarios; and

(iv) A UNEP poster, available in all United Nations official languages, as a vehicle for building awareness of the special link between women and nature.

(d) UNEP coordinated and participated in special events during the conference, to inform delegates of the objectives contained in section K of the Strategic Objectives and Actions of the Platform for Action, entitled "Women and the environment":

(i) UNEP and the Chinese National Environmental Protection Agency cosponsored a tree planting ceremony of indigenous species at the nature reserve in Milu to commemorate the World Conference;

(ii) The Executive Director addressed the non-governmental organization forum of plenaries in Huairou; participated in the round-table discussions on the topic "Women and men on the road to Istanbul"; participated in the high-level panel discussion on "Gender, environment and development"; and officiated at the closing of the non-governmental organization forum.

(e) UNEP has participated in the follow-up to the "Women and the environment" section of the Platform for Action, by:

(i) contributing to inter-agency discussions and the formulation of inputs to the System-Wide Medium-Term Plan for Women and Development;

(ii) providing the lead for environmental issues as part of an inter-agency group on women in conflict in East Africa; and

(iii) producing 12 awareness-building posters on the major themes of the conference as they related to environment.

5. At only the mid-point of the biennium, efforts to integrate a gender perspective into the work and activities of UNEP have already made substantial progress. The following actions will be given priority in 1997:

(a) Field testing the gender sensitivity checklist for the screening of UNEP projects;

(b) Creating a network of gender focal points within Governments working in the field of gender and environment, with the purpose of exchanging information and experience;

(c) Strengthening the women's roster to ensure that qualified women are encouraged to apply for UNEP jobs; and

(d) Ensuring an adequate input by UNEP into United Nations inter-agency and other major conferences and events.

6. Gender will be included in the UNEP programme of work for 1998-1999. In addition, UNEP will continue to pursue a vigorous fund-raising strategy to co-finance activities and to secure Junior Professional Officer support from donor Governments.